DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 056 830 RE 003 882

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TITLE Multi-Language Rapid Reading, or, The Tower of Babel Revisited.
PUB DATE Dec 71
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, Tampa, Fla., Dec. 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Conference Reports; Eye Movements; *French; *Rapid Reading; *Reading Programs; Reading Research; *Reading Speed; *Secondary School Students; Second Language Learning; *Spanish; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

A total of 118 students were enrolled in the Multi-Language Rapid Reading Program, and by the end of 9 weeks they were able to read intermediate French and Spanish with rates up to 35,000 words per minute (w.p.m.) in Spanish and 25,000 w.p.m. in French. No student scored less than 750 w.p.m. in either language, with 65 percent the lowest comprehension score. The results of this program demonstrate that the teaching of foreign language can be speeded up considerably. Some experts insist that it is impossible for a person to see more than about an inch in print in one focus and that the maximum possible reading speed is therefore 800 to 900 w.p.m. However, these experts have limited their consideration of the direction of reading to that of left to right. They have not taken into consideration that there are many different ways of reading a page and many people can see entire paragraphs and pages at a glance. The amount of evidence pertaining to the positive results of various rapid learning programs should indicate to writers of textbooks in reading, mathematics, spelling, and foreign languages that new methods of learning should be outlined which will bring about greater learning at much faster rates. References are included. (AW)

ED056830

MULTI-LANGUAGE RAPID READING

(Or, The Tower of Babel Re-Visited)

by

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Presented to the National Reading Conference

December, 1971

Tampa, Florida

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MULTI-LANGUAGE RAPID READING
or
THE TOWER OF BABEL RE-VISITED

"Fantastic! Utterly fantastic!"

"What in the world have I been doing these past six years?"

The above were the exclamations of two foreign language teachers after observing a group of 19 high school students read rapidly in French and Spanish at speeds up to 35,000 words a minute. One of these students could also read up to 50,000 words a minute in English. The other 18 did not achieve higher speeds than 30,000 words a minute in their native language. All could read rapidly at 5,000 or more words a minute in all three languages. All scored 65 percent or better on teacher-prepared tests over different materials written in the three languages.

Some of the 19 had previously had courses in one or the other of the foreign languages, while nine had had no training in either French or Spanish. The highest reading rates scored by this group on foreign language tests just prior to the beginning of this program was 95 words a minute with 85 percent comprehension in Spanish, and 79 words a minute in French with 80 percent comprehension. The highest rate in the English reading tests for this group was 385 words a minute with 85 percent comprehension.

At the close of the Multi-Language Rapid Reading Program in high school, nine weeks later, the highest reading rate in Spanish was 35,000 words a minute with 75 percent comprehension. This was made by a girl who was in her third year of Spanish. The high score in French was made by a girl who had had no previous training in either language. She scored 25,000 w.p.m. with 80 percent comprehension. No student scored less than 750 words a minute in either language, with 65 percent the lowest comprehension score. (This was made by a Spanish

teacher.)

In other classes of a similar nature in junior high the scores were higher overall, but there was a much greater variance in the comprehension scores. The scores here ranged from 90,000 words a minute in Spanish with 30 percent comprehension to 2,500 words per minute with 85 percent comprehension; and the scores in French were much the same except that the speeds were a little lower.

A total of 118 students, most of them in high school and junior high school, were enrolled in this Multi-Language Rapid Reading Program. Twelve college students also participated.

The results of the program demonstrate to this writer that the teaching of foreign languages can be speeded up considerably. Students can learn much faster when they are presented with more material and are shown how to use it rapidly. The students in the program mentioned above were able to read in intermediate French and Spanish at the end of nine weeks. Why not? They were encountering thousands and tens of thousands of words daily in the two languages. They had to learn to read in the two languages if by no other process than that of osmosis.

Compare these students with a particular class in first year Spanish in one of the same schools as one of the special classes. There the students read and discussed 90 pages in 180 days. This meant that they were reading about one-half page a day. Is it any wonder that after nine months of this kind of inane teaching the students, many of them receiving A's for their efforts, failed to be anywhere near proficient in that language? Of course, we usually do not expect one to become proficient in a language after only nine months of training in it. But why not? We had over 100 persons who acquired fair to good reading ability in two languages in nine weeks!

This writer has taught rapid reading to many thousands of people, children and adults. Included in the classes were the average and above average, the deaf and dumb and hard of hearing, the cerebral palsied and the mentally retarded. Adults and children from five years of age and up to 76 have been in the same classes. A pretty little blonde girl who had "turned five" just two days before she entered a rapid reading class could read 6,000 words a minute on a second grade level by the time she was five years and six weeks old.

The girl was probably the first child that age ever to read this rapidly, but only because she was the first to be given the opportunity to do so. Since then others have done the same kind of thing. In a group of 18 second graders, for example, the reading scores from second grade books ranged from 2,248 words a minute with 100 percent comprehension, to 34,788 words per minute with 90 percent comprehension. In this particular group the lowest score on the comprehension test was 40 percent with a rate of 19,000 words per minute. Page-turning had long since become a problem for these second graders.

The teacher who worked with the above group wrote:

> My results have proved to me that something must be done to the reading program in our schools. I feel that fifth grade or even third grade is too late to start.
>
> Children are fascinated with speed. If speed is stressed right from the beginning, then it will not all of a sudden be an added pressure for the child.
>
> After working with these children for eight weeks on speed reading, I am convinced that this program will work with the primary grade children as well, if not better, (she had previously worked with children of different ages) than with those in the intermediate and junior high school grades.
>
> (Maureen VanderSande, "Panoramic Reading in the Second Grade." Unpublished manuscript, Culver-Stockton College, Division of Education and Psychology, Canton, Mo, May, 1971)

Like many others, this writer has myriads of data of many kinds depicting the results of training in rapid reading. There are also data showing the results of similar training in mathematics and spelling. Some information has already been given above showing some of the possibilities in teaching people to read rapidly in foreign languages. In this latter respect we at this institution feel that a significant breakthrough has been made. We have demonstrated that it is possible to teach students to read rapidly in a language which was heretofore foreign to them, and to learn it in a considerably shorter time than is usually allowed.

Has there ever been a time in the history of man that such an accomplishment as this has been made? Further, has there ever been a time in our history when such an accomplishment is more necessary than it is now? Has there ever been a time when we have been more in need of greater learning at a faster rate? It is unthinkable that we should be forced to plod along the learning process at the same rate at which our ancestors went. Yet this is just what some of our reading "experts" are telling us we must do because, they say, it is physically impossible for us to see more and to react faster than did our progenitors of 200 years and more ago. They continue to do this despite the stacks of statistics standing around proving the impossible to be possible.

During the NBC-Television Program "FIRST TUESDAY" on June 1, 1971, Dr. David Waark, of the University of Minnesota, stated that it is impossible for a person to see more than about an inch of print in one focus. He used a machine called "The Reading Eye-Two Camera" to demonstrate this "fact." He also stated on that program that it is impossible for a person, for this reason, to read more than 800 or 900 words a minute with good understanding.

Many of the students of this writer saw that program and had a good laugh. In their own class in Reading Improvement the average rate in words per minute

was 3,128, with an average comprehension score of 78 percent. This average rate of 3,128 did not include the scores of the six highest students in the class, two of whom were also reading rapidly in three languages. The scores of the six were so high that they were not included in the others for fear of distorting the average and making it a lop-sided affair.

In conversation with Dr. Waark a few months earlier this writer had asked if he had attempted to use the Reading Eye-Two Camera on a person who read in a direction different from the traditional left-to-right. He answered no, he had not. Still earlier he stated in a meeting of the North Central Reading Association (Flint, Michigan, Oct. 31, 1969) that "there is no other way to read," meaning no other direction to read.

Many others agree with Dr. Waark, including Dr. Gabriel M. Della-Piana and Dr. George Spache. The following excerpt is taken from one of the writings of Dr. Della-Piana:

> So much attention is given to the high speed of silent reading in the press and special courses that a brief mention might be made here of the argument by Spache (1962) that 800 to 900 words a minute is the maximum silent reading speed physiologically possible...
>
> Spache's argument rests on the assumption that by "reading" one means reading most of the words on a page, and on the fact that the maximum number of words the eye can possibly see in one fixation during continuous reading is 2.5 to 3 words. Minimum fixation time is equal to one-half second and minimum time for the sweep to the next fixation or return sweep to the next line is one-thirtieth of a second.
>
> Spache's position is based on current data. Of course, it is possible that just as swimming and high jump records are continually broken, the maximum word-per-fixation record may sometime be broken. But as the data now stands, speeds beyond 900 words a minute are attained by skimming and scanning and not by rapidly perceiving most of the words in the text. (Reading Diagnosis and Prescription, Gabriel M. Della-Piana, Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Boston, 1968, p. 83.)

It is obvious that neither of these gentlemen has carried his experiments far enough, nor has Dr. Waark. None of them seems aware of the fact that many people actually see and read better in directions other than from left to right. Indeed, these gentlemen seem to have decreed the way in which the brain operates. We should point out to them that thinking is not necessarily a left to right process, nor is the brain confined in its operations to any one direction or method. If the experimenters use only one method or direction they may certainly expect to obtain results which are narrow and limited. It appears that this is what has happened in the case of the users of the Reading Eye-Two Camera.

The writer once asked one of the users of this camera if he had attempted to track the eye movements of a person as that person was reading four or five lines of musical notes across a page. The answer was no. When asked what he thought he might find if he tried it, the answer was, "I don't know. And anyway, what would it prove? People simply don't read more than one line at a time in reading."

The rediculousness of this situation becomes apparent immediately. The organist sometimes reads four or even eight lines of musical notes across the page and down the page at the same time. How can he possibly do this if the human eye is limited as Spache and others say it is? In the interest of proving their scientific findings it would appear that they must widen their thinking and their experiments.

This writer can produce scores and hundreds of people who can see entire paragraphs and pages at a glance, seeing the words in literally dozens of different ways or directions. Some read in a zig-zag fashion, down the page and up the next page, some go straight up the right hand page after going straight down the left hand page. Several students read the right hand page first then the left hand one.

There are probably as many ways of reading the words on a page as there are people in the world. The fact that we have limited ourselves and others to one way does not preclude the many other possibilities. We should be careful not to impose our own limitations on others, as some of the reading "experts" have been doing. This writer firmly believes that this is one of the reasons for our dreadful reading situation in this country now. We have allowed others to impose their limitations on us to the extent that we have come to believe that theirs' are common to us all.

The human brain is not geared or patterned to one way of doing something. Or, if it appears to have been so patterened, we can "unpattern" it, often with but little effort. For example, in a current reading class a fourth grade teacher reads across both pages in one sweep--from right to left. When asked how she does it, she replied, "I don't know. I just do it, and it makes sense to me." To the class it had been suggested that there are many ways of seeing and reading words, and this had been one of the ways suggested. A few seats from her is a school principal, who also teaches kindergarten. She reads the opposite direction, from left to right, but sweeps across both pages without moving her eyes down and up, or up and down. Another member of the class reads up the left hand page and down the right. All read with understanding, the kind we call "book report comprehension."

A first grade teacher in the same class says that her first graders "are running away from me in reading. They turn the pages so fast I just know they can't possibly be seeing all of the words there. But then I ask them to tell me what they read, and they do it! It's crazy."

In the light of the tremendous amount of evidence pertaining to the positive results of various rapid learning programs, I strongly suggest that vigorous efforts be made to persuade the writers of textbooks in reading, math, spelling and the foreign languages to propose and outline methods and techniques

of learning which will bring about greater learning at much faster rates. Certain it is that our present textbooks suggest little that was not being suggested 15, 20 and 30 years ago. Phonics, drill, vocabulary lists, word and sentence exercises, etc., all have their proper places, but certainly not the places to which they have been traditionally assigned.

It is "plumb dumb" of us to continue to assume that the human eye and mind are limited to seeing and recognizing one word one inch in length, when the good musician may see and recognize entire musical scores at once. It is "plumb dumb" of us to assume that the human brain is limited in any manner whatsoever, unless due to physical damage. We have been done a great injustice, and that injustice is being handed down to the third and fourth generation by the writers and publishers of textbooks which they sell to the schools.

I believe that it is high time, even past time, that our "educators" become "educable."

TABLE I

NINE WEEKS TRI-LANGUAGE RAPID READING PROGRAM SHOWING READING RATES IN ENGLISH, SPANISH AND FRENCH. RATES SHOWN IN WORDS PER MINUTE.* (READING RATES ACCOMPANIED BY 55 PERCENT COMPREHENSION OR BETTER).

High School

Name	Rate in English	Rate in Spanish	Rate in French
Connie B.	50,000	35,000	25,600
Tricia	30,000	18,600	22,000
Diane	15,450	8,200	8,000
Kay	16,000	9,300	6,000
Harry	22,500	16,200	16,200
James	26,000	15,000	9,000
Sylvia	7,500	5,200	6,000
Jay	5,000	5,000	6,200
Trudy	9,900	5,000	6,200

Junior High School

Mary	5,000	2,500	2,500
Cindy	21,600	25,000	40,000
Karla	71,000	25,400	30,000
Karen	54,000	10,200	7,200
Becky	62,100	43,000	40,500
Tom	30,300	5,000	7,000
Connie H.	59,200	20,100	18,000
Lanea	60,000	8,000	12,000
Tami	57,600	29,200	30,000
Janet	64,800	20,100	12,200

*Two-minute timings were given

TABLE II

READING RATE AND COMPREHENSION SCORES OF TEN SECOND GRADERS USING 2^2 LEVEL READING MATERIALS

Name	*Reading Rate (words per minute)	Comprehension (%)
Richard	7,899	100
Tommy	26,212	75
Kelly	12,903	50
Troy	34,788	90
Tammy	4,909	100
Bruce	6,450	100
Ginger	2,600	100
Sharon	21,100	95
Todd	21,500	90
Cecil	2,248	100

*Scores based on one minute timings

The data given in the tables below are only partial in that only a few of the children's scores appear. However, these data are indicative of the total results.

TABLE III

TEN WEEKS READING PROGRAM SHOWING
BEFORE-AND-AFTER READING SCORES AND I.Q. SCORES*

Pupil	Grade	Initial I.Q.	I.Q. After 10 Wks.	Gains Or Losses In I.Q.	Read Rate w.p.m.	Read Rate 10 Weeks Later w.p.m.
Kathy	6	120	128	8+	216	5,400
Kent	6	108	112	4+	266	14,260
Bryan	6	112	-	-	360	4,198
Vicki	6	104	125	21+	360	13,160
Susan	6	112	115	3+	204	3,920
Martin	6	124	-	-	180	17,280
Debbie	6	99	115	16+	180	24,288
Ralph	3	104	86	18-	136	10,730
Kelly	3	110	106	4-	105	7,700
Danny	3	96	106	10+	88	5,460
Gregory	3	98	114	16+	136	14,602
Jeffery	3	86	110	24+	200	4,977

* Scores obtained from Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence tests.

TABLE IV
SEVEN WEEKS READING PROGRAM SHOWING
BEFORE-AND-AFTER READING RATE AND
COMPREHENSION SCORES

Name	Grade	*I.Q.	Beg. Reading Scores		End. Reading Scores	
			Rate (wpm)	Comp(%)	Rate(wpm)	Comp(%)
Dianne	5	115	216	100	24,000	90
Harold	5	102	180	60	4,000	80
Terri	5	122	284	80	30,000	90
Chris	5	124	144	80	10,000	80
Mike C.	6	102	218	70	13,444	90
Anita	6	125	285	37	13,316	95
Tony	6	126	251	78	17,178	95
Nancy	6	121	218	60	30,980	70
Mark	4	125	134	60	2,560	60
Mike E.	4	96	134	80	2,544	50
Barbette	4	100	201	60	4,320	60
Lora	4	93	235	50	4,000	50
Tanya	4	123	201	60	3,420	100
Billy	4	92	134	40	9,408	60
Gretchen	4	149	201	60	2,208	80

*Scores obtained from American School Intelligence Test

TABLE V

SIX WEEKS MATH - SPELLING PROGRAM (5th GR.)
*FINAL TEST SCORES (TEST TIME = 10 MIN.)
PROBLEMS WITH TWO AND THREE DIGITS ACROSS AND DOWN

Name	Spelling (Poss. 162)	Math (# Attempted)	Math (# Correct)
Dwana	124	112	112
Mike	153	110	93
Joyce	141	127	109
Larry	146	94	91
Julie	144	103	103
Toni	130	119	103
Conda	143	101	98
Debbie	95	87	75
Patricia	153	120	103
Brenda	117	52	50
Pamela	141	134	126
Tina	154	156	154
Kim	154	131	120
Carla	138	32	25
Vicki	127	49	19
Ricky	114	71	31
Rita	98	74	54
Robert	115	107	72

*On this test the math problems and the spelling words were mixed indiscriminately as to location on the pages.

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